

**DID YOU KNOW?** At the time it was made, *The Dark Crystal* was hailed as the only live action film in which a human actor makes no appearance.

## REPLAY: THIS MONTH IN MOVIES

# DECEMBER 1982

Muppets and magic...

## THE DARK CRYSTAL

In the early eighties, *Star Wars* producer Gary Kurtz, renowned fantasy illustrator Brian Froud and *Muppet Show* alumni Jim Henson and Frank Oz collaborated on an ambitious project which would be set entirely in an imagined world and completely devoid of human performers (and anything resembling humans).

Utilising rod, cable and radio-controlled puppets and animatronics, the world of *The Dark Crystal* was populated by a number of different races: specifically the elf-like Gelflings, which echoed the distinctive

faerie designs of Froud; the sinister vulture-like Skeksis, and the wise Muppet-like Mystics.

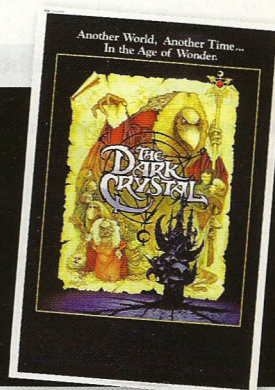
The end result is one of the most impressively rendered fantasy films from the days prior to CGI – a brilliant technical and visual achievement that can still hold its own against today's motion-capture marvels.

*The Dark Crystal* follows a Gelfling named Jen in his attempts to reunite the titular object with a missing shard, and thus restore balance to his world.

Those who grew up in the '80s know *The Dark Crystal* well (along with Henson's other

muppet show *Labyrinth*), and have either fond memories of the magic on display or found the whole thing annoying and a chore to watch.

Released on December 17, 1982, *The Dark Crystal* didn't exactly do big business at the box office – thanks to the arrival of *E.T.* in cinemas around the same time – and most people eventually encountered it on home video. Moreover, given the film's tendency to veer erratically between cute and scary, parents feared it would be too dark and frightening for their kids and stayed away.



## OTHER DECEMBER PREMIERES

### KING KONG (1979)

This reimagining of the *King Kong* story brought with it a nostalgic wave of audience enthusiasm in those raised on the brilliant 1933 original. However, when Kong opened and was immediately critically panned by everybody on the planet, the enthusiasm – like the mighty ape himself – toppled and plummeted headfirst into the concrete.

### SERPICO (1973)

Frank Serpico was one cop who could not be lured into profiteering through the actions of crime and police corruption. Based on a true story, Al Pacino turns in a fabulous performance as a policeman who decided to take a strong stance against the prevalence of criminal extortion deemed a 'perk' of the job by the majority of his peers.

### THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD (1958)

The first of three Sinbad films from Columbia to feature Dynamation – Ray Harryhausen's term for stop-motion animation. The film contained a skeleton animation sequence that proved so popular with audiences that it prompted Harryhausen to devise the famous skeleton battle in *Jason and the Argonauts*.

### THE GODFATHER: PART III (1990)

Pacino returned to the role of Michael Corleone in the weakest of the *Godfather* trilogy. The aging *Godfather* has almost succeeded in legitimising the family business, but violent mob history isn't easily forgotten and this is referenced by Corleone in the movie's dialogue: "Just when I thought I was out... they pull me back in!"

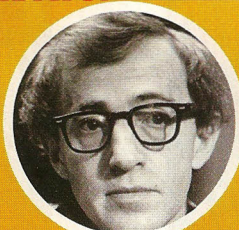


## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

→ Woody Allen  
- December 1, 1935

→ Ozzy Osbourne  
- December 3, 1948

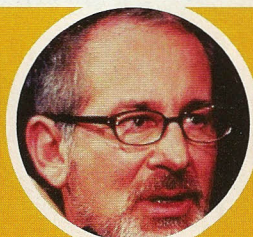
→ Jay-Z  
- December 5, 1969



→ Kim Basinger  
- December 8, 1953

→ Kirk Douglas  
- December 9, 1916

→ Ludwig van Beethoven  
- December 16, 1770



→ Katie Holmes  
- December 18, 1978

→ Steven Spielberg  
- December 18, 1946

→ Sienna Miller  
- December 28, 1981